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Edwards, Elisha Jay

William McKinley

[S.l.]

[1896?]

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WILLIAM McKINLEY.

WILLIAM McKINLEY was born at Niles, Trumbull County, Ohio, January 29, 1843. His ancestors lived in Pennsylvania, whence they emigrated from Scotland fully two hundred years ago. His grandfather, Daniel McKinley, was a soldier in the Revolution, distinguished for gallantry at Brandywine, Germantown, and Monmouth. His father was an industrious, sensible, and prosperous iron manufacturer, who died in 1892 at the age of eighty-five; his mother is still living at Canton, Ohio, at the advanced age of eighty-seven. Young McKinley was educated at the public schools and at the Poland (Mahoning County) Academy, and attended for a short time the Allegheny (M. E.) College at Meadville, Pa.

In June, 1861, he enlisted in the Twenty-third Ohio Volunteer Infantry as a private soldier. On September 24, 1862, he was promoted to Second Lieutenant; on February 7, 1863, to First Lieutenant; on July 25, 1864, to Captain, and was brevetted Major in the Regular Army of the United States by President Lincoln, personally, for gallant and meritorious service at the battles of Opequan, Fisher's Hill, and Cedar Creek. He served on the staffs of ex-President Hayes and Major-General George Crook, and after Crook's capture he served for a time on the staff of Major-General Winfield S. Hancock, and subsequently on

the staff of General Samuel S. Carroll. He was with the famous Twenty-third in all its battles, and was mustered out with it on July 26, 1865 after more than four years hard, active and distinguished service. He had a liking for the military profession, and it was said that but for the advice of his father he would at the solicitation of General Carroll have attached himself to the Regular Army.

At the close of the war he returned to Ohio. He studied law with Hon. Charles E. Glidden and David Wilson, of Mahoning County, and then attended the Law School at Albany, New York. In 1867 he was admitted to the bar, and in May of the same year he located in Canton, Stark County, where he soon formed a partnership with Judge Belden. He was elected Prosecuting Attorney of Stark County in 1869, and served a term in that capacity with signal credit and ability.

On January 25, 1871, he was married to Miss Ida Saxton, daughter of James A. Saxton, a prominent citizen of Canton. The union has been a peculiarly happy one; two children were born to them, but both died when young. Mrs. McKinley has been constantly in poor health since 1873, and nothing could surpass the attention and care she has received from her devoted husband.

He was elected to Congress in 1876, and served continuously in the House of Representatives until March, 1891—fourteen years in all—except part of his fourth term, when he was unseated late in the first session. His seat was given to the late Hon. Jonathan Wallace, of East Liverpool, his Democratic competitor. Major McKinley has been three times "gerrymandered." In 1878 he was placed in a district consisting of Stark, Wayne, Ashland and Portage Counties, which was Democratic by 1,800; but McKinley carried it by 1,300 majority. In 1884 he was placed in a district consisting of Stark, Summit, Medina and Wayne Counties, then strongly Democratic, and was elected by over 2,000 majority. Under the Price gerrymander of 1890, his district was made up of Stark, Medina, Wayne and Holmes Counties, which had given Campbell, the year before, 3,900 majority, but on the fullest vote ever polled in the district, Major McKinley reduced this majority to 303. He received 2,500 more votes in the district than had been cast for General Harrison for President in 1888 in the same counties. While in Congress Major McKinley served on the Committees of Revision of Laws, Judiciary Expendiutres, Post Office Department, and Rules. But his greatest fame consists in his prominence and profound ability in the consideration and preparation of economic measures for now more than fifteen years. When, in 1880, General Garfield was nominated for President, Major McKinley was assigned to the Committee on Ways and Means in his place. He continued to serve on this Committee until the end of his Congressional career, being Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee during the Fifty-first Congress, and author of the famous tariff law which bears his name. For ten years past Major McKinley has everywhere been the recognized champion of the cardinal Republican principle of protection. He was a Delegate-at-large to the Republican National Convention of 1884, and supported the lamented James G. Blaine for the Presidency. He was also Delegate-at-large to the National Convention of 1888, when he supported Senator Sherman. At the latter Convention his own name was sprung for the Presidential nomination, but in a speech which was characteristic of the man he positively forbade the use of his name for the reason that he had pledged his loyalty to Mr. Sherman. He was Chairman of the Committee on Resolutions at both these Conventions. On June 7, 1891, Major McKinley was unanimously nominated by the Republicans of Ohio for Governor; and after one of the most hotly contested campaigns in the history of the State, he was elected over Hon. James E. Campbell, then Governor, by a plurality of 21,511 votes. At the Republican State Convention of Ohio in 1892, Governor McKinley was elected one of the Delegates-at-large to the Republican National Convention at Minneapolis. He was made Chairman of the Ohio delegation, and Permanent Chairman of the Convention. Although not desiring to have his name mentioned for the Presidency, and doing all he could personally to re-nominate President Harrison, he nevertheless received one hundred and eighty-two votes for that high office. At the

election in November, 1893, Governor McKinley was re-elected, defeating Hon. Lawrence T. Neal, of Ross County, by 80,995 majorty, in a total vote of 835,604. He received 433,342 votes, the greatest number ever given any State or Presidential candidate in the history of Ohio. The unprecedented Republican victories in Ohio in 1894 and 1895 are also directly attributable to his effective work for the party. In 1894 the plurality of Hon. Samuel M. Taylor for Secretary of State was 137,086, and in 1895 the plurality of Hon. Asa S. Bushnell for Governor was 92,662.

WILLIAM McKINLEY.

WHAT HE IS AND WHAT HE STANDS FOR. A CHARACTER STUDY.

WILLIAM McKINLEY was chosen a Representative in Congress when thirty-three years of age; at fifty his name represents a principle of government which appeals to millions. That is an honor which has been the lot of no Congressman since David Wilmot gained it. The youth who stood before the Speaker, pale, slender, almost of timid suggestion, but of such dignity of countenance and manner as caused to be fixed upon him the eyes of the veterans of Congress when he took the oath, became, seventeen years later, the protagonist of a principle not boldly avowed until he did it. He has compelled his countrymen to accept his name as a synonym for a policy which touches the core of American institutions. Clay has been called the father of the protective system, although Hamilton was that. Judge Kelley was for thirty years its special guardian; Mr. Morrill applied the principle with wondrous skill when framing the war tariff; but McKinley cast its apologies and its disguises away, and came forth, true to his early inspiration, to proclaim it the American principle, to be avowed, defended, and made triumphant for its own sake. In 1877 he was for a protective *tariff;* in 1888 he flung qualification to the winds, and stepped to

the front, the champion of protection of and for itself. And he put his party, till then hesitating, upon that radical foundation; made Congress his servant, so that it spread upon the statute books, for the first time, a law which was a tariff for protection, and not merely a protective tariff.

Two years later, when the American people seemed to have repudiated his work with overwhelming indignation, he furnished as fine an inspiration of courage and faith as we have ever seen, when his voice rang clear in that temptest of defeat, and bade his party hold fast and steady its lines. There were sneers and flippant jests for him, but he seemed to have the faith of the Covenanters, whose blood runs in his veins. There gathered about him, in his hotel parlor, in a great Eastern city, at that time, men of his party, some complaining, many timid, seeming almost ready to turn half backward on the party's record. He listened to them calmly, patiently, till they were done, and then said, "My friends, be firm. This is only a cross current, a chop sea; the tide of truth flows surely on beneath." Then these men went away inspired by the faith that was in him, and understanding something of the quality which had made him a man of power. To them, at least, the story of November 7th* furnished no occasion for surprise.

It was at the Republican Convention of 1888 that McKinley first made revelation that he could inspire and command as well. The prize that body was to offer, another than he received; but the honors were his. President Cleveland had with lofty courge flung out his banner of defiance of the protective policy, and rallied his party under it. McKinley matched that splendid and passionate challenge, by unfurling in that convention another banner with a new legend: "Protection not an incident, but a right and duty;" and with that inspiration faced his party against the opposition for the battle of November.

Without patronage, without power of any sort, except that which is the handmaid of persuasion, he stayed the influence and barred for the time the issue created by the mightiest personal force in our

*Re-election as Governor of Ohio by an unprecedented majority.

public life for a generation. He prevailed with Congress as he had with his party's representatives at Chicago, and put upon the statute books a law of which he made proclamation, "This is a tariff for the protection of all things American."

McKinley is better known, and perhaps less understood, than any of those who began public life with him. It is sometimes said that his success was served by chance or circumstance; that his faith is cool calculation, his enthusiasm a simulation, his impressive public manner the posing of an actor, his gravity an affection of self-praise. But those who have been near him for many years do not speak thus of him. Nor can those who, with something of impartial spirit, make some study of his career, come to such estimation of him.

He went to Congress well equipped. He was of the age which seems best. The great careers have been begun early there. Mr. Blaine has said that the golden age for entering a service in Congress which is to be prolonged, is at the first flush of vigorous manhood. Like McKinley, he was thirty-three when he first went there; and of that age or thereabouts were Garfield and Conkling and Allison and Sherman and Randall and Reed. The House is a jealous mistress. Over its portals should be written, "Ye who enter here must be single in my service." And it was with such purpose that McKinley stepped from the court-room of the country village to that finest of legislative arenas.

Congress was not greatly concerned about the principle which was in McKinley's heart, sound and abiding, when he entered that body. The Government was financing for the resumption of specie payments. Partisanship was still hot and angry over the disputed results of 1876. Frank Hurd had hurled the doctrine of free trade absolute over the heads of his rebuking party in a brilliant speech which made a sensation, but not an impression. Mr. Morrison was hinting at an early necessity for tariff revision. Carlisle was compelling the first tributes of respect for extraordinary lucid and thorough presentation of financial views. Kelley stood as a grim guard at the gateway of the Morrill tar-

ff. The Republican party was proudly looking forward to that day in 1879 when the Government was to pay its debts in coin and at demand. McKinley entered a Congress absorbed in these matters, and, although one of the youngest of the members, he must have early revealed himself as a man of power, who only awaited experience and opportunity. He was indicated in his second term as the man of all others who should take Garfield's chair in the Ways and Means Committee; and there he remained until, becoming the Committee's Chairman, he was named by the Speaker leader of the House. He was then only forty-six years of age. No trick of politics, no wielding of men so as to make them play to his purpose, no other quality than intellectual ability and personal strength could have brought so young a man so swiftly to membership of the most important Committee of the House.

His career seems to have been logically indicated when he, a youth not long out of the army, his shingle just swung over the door of a country law office in Canton, met his opportunity and took it. It is a tradition which his neighbors like to tell, that at that time there came a cunning lawyer to his town, who matched himself against McKinley in debate, and beat him and his feeble argument for protection down by the forceful pleadings of a pronounced free trader: and that then the iron entered McKinley's heart, and he said to a companion, "Hereafter, no man shall overcome me so; I know that I am right in this matter, and I know that I can show that I am right, bye and bye." Thenceforth he studied books and men and facts and his country, that he might be fortified in maintaining his principle.

Nothing, perhaps, shows more clearly the serious and earnest quality of his mind than the manner in which he approached this subject. The young lawyer dug down at the roots, and, as he afterward told the story to a group of friends, he went back to government itself and made his analysis. "Governments are for the protection of person and property. Our own agreement of government, which is the written Constitution, makes specific guarantees, and adds to them the promise of providing for the general welfare of the people. In our declaration of

rights there is to be found mentioned an inalienable right, 'the pursuit of happiness.' The right of labor and of labor's best reward is, therefore, not only inalienable, for in it lies the power to pursue happiness; but it is a right protected in terms by the Constitution." That was the groundwork of McKinley's faith, and upon that as a bed-rock principle he built his defenses, which Mr. Carlisle has said have been as perfect as it is possible to construct and maintain for the protective principle.

Therefore he was fortified when Judge Thurman, profoundly versed in constitutional law, said one day, "McKinley, where is your constitutional right for protection?" and he replied, "Where was yours when the creator of your party, Jefferson, bought the Louisiana territory?"

"Ah," said Thurman with ready reply, "that was not unconstitutional but ultra-constitutional."

"Well, then, Senator, if your party can defend the purchase of the Louisiana territory as an ultra-constitutional act, isn't it straining at a gnat when it denounces protection as an unconstitutional policy? Moreover, I affirm that the Constitution defends and maintains it."

When he made that decision at the debating club where the cunning lawyer met him, McKinley took opportunity at its time. He received conviction then, and made of it a prisoner for life. As he has cherished his faith, it has seemed to those with whom he has been upon terms of intimacy as though it had sometimes opened his eyes so that he has seen wondrous things for our people when this faith becomes triumphant, and is in its perfect flower. That has made him, what his friend Mr. Reed once called him, and what many of his associates in Congress have come to regard him, in some respects the most passionate American, for his patriotism is a genuine passion. Those who travel with him, those who meet him in some place away from his home, have been amazed at his persistent inquiry respecting material things which may suggest a lesson of American prosperity—the railways, their mileage, their traffic, their dividends, their proposed extensions; the mills, what they make, the hands they employ, how the workingmen live, how many comforts and luxuries they possess; the distinctive trade of any

city where he happens to be whether it increases or is being taken away, and why. Of the splendid domain where American agriculture flourishes he will tell men who live upon it more than they know, and then persist in inquiry like a cross-examiner.

Besides possessing the logical mind, Governor McKinley has acquired the habits of patience, industry, and a capacity to submit to drudgery which is fully appreciated only by those who know what the preparation of a tariff bill involves. This is unquestionably an acquired talent; for McKinley, by nature, had some tendency, if not to indolence, at least to easy manner of life. But when he made the proclamation and maintenance of protection his serious business, he knew the dreary drudgery that was before him; he knew that no other policy of our Government compels such incessant labor, constant watchfulness, wide reading, and all-reaching comprehension of all the energies which go to make American life, as does the mastery of this one.

If McKinley had been seen by the American people when he was engaged in acquiring and applying knowledge, he would have been discovered at his Committee rooms sometimes eight or ten hours a day, or in consultation with his Committee at his private rooms often until long past midnight. He would have been seen exploring the mysteries of chemistry; reading the reports of trade associations; sometimes with great volumes massed up before him, through which he searched with the penetrating industry of one who compiles history; and in addition to these duties was his occupation upon the floor of the House. Such labor as this is exceeded by no lawyer preparing briefs, no physician making research into disease, no merchant in his counting-room; and it puts to the highest test the capacity of a man for dreary drudgery. The maker of a tariff bill, the faithful member of a Ways and Means Committee, whether he be a protectionist or the opposite, knows his country and has his finger upon the pulse which beats with the material energy of the world. Therefore McKinley stands proved by the most severe of tests as a man capable of exhaustive and long-continued labor. This quality, combined with the logical habit of his mind as well as his native

disposition, has caused him to be esteemed one of the most serious of men. Perhaps it is for this reason that not for him have been those furious and exultant manifestations of popular acclaim which men with more brilliant, dramatic, and splendid personal traits and intellectua display secure. He would never compel a whirlwind of enthusiasm for personal qualities, as did Clay or Douglas, or, of our own time, Mr. Blaine. But he has not failed in these later years to command more permanent tributes.

It has been said that McKinley is no politician in the sense in which that word is commonly employed; that he has no great command over masses of men, no capacity for playing the game of politics as chess is played, and wielding caucuses, conventions, and communities to serve his purpose. And it is doubtless true that he has, as yet, made no such manifestation as would justify the opinion that he is to be esteemed one of the greater politicians. His single-hearted purpose may have made such a pursuit impossible.

In his control of his tariff bill, when he was leader of the House, he revealed the very highest qualities in management of men, and of men mastered by the supreme impulse—that of the pocketbook. A manufacturer, a Democrat, sought him at his rooms one evening, and said to him: "Mr. McKinley, I have been to my member, who is a Democrat like myself, to have him help me get a hearing before your Committee. I have been to my Senator, who is a Democrat, and I have been to others, and they have all failed me. Now I have come to you. I have no claim on you, but I want to ask the privilege of presenting my case."

McKinley sat down with that man till midnight, listened to his expositions, searched the books and precedents, scrutinized the schedules, and at last said to the manufacturer, who was a stranger to him: "Your claim is just. I thank you for bringing it to me. We should have erred if we had left the schedule as it is. I will see that it is changed."

His simplicity of life and character should serve him in the politician's game. He lives like one who has been bred among the plain

people of the land, and has never longed to stray from such association. Those who know him tell many anecdotes that suggest this plain and simple habit. McKinley walking to the Capitol with a friend, was overhauled by a fellow Congressman, a Democrat, who, behind a gaily caparisoned team and with a gorgeously liveried driver, hailed McKinley and invited him to ride. McKinley cast a queer glance at the vehicle, and declined, saying in an undertone to his friend: "I should never know how to get into that thing, or, being in, how to get out." The rich man insisted, and McKinley climbed up over the lofty wheels, scrambled like a boy who steals a ride behind; and, being at last seated, received this compliment: "McKinley, people who saw you get in might say you were a better Democrat than I."

"Who is that?" said Henry Irving, looking down from the galleries of the House and indicating McKinley. "He should be a man of intellectual power." And it has seemed to others, who, seeing the House listening to him with the impressive silence which there means highest respect, that, as was said of Chatham, there was something even finer in the man than in the speech he uttered.

It was that quality he revealed when men came to him after the Convention of 1888, and again after that of 1892, when he had the Presidential nomination almost surely within his grasp, but commanded those who would offer it to be still, because he could not in honor receive it, having gone to those places in behalf of another; and these men told him that he had done as honorable a thing as the story of American politics tells. He looked upon them with amazement, saying simply this: "Is it such an honorable thing not to do a dishonorable thing?"

It has been said that the finest tribute paid by a popular convention was that which he received when he rejected these offers of the nomination. But it has seemed to others that perhaps a gentler, truer measure of esteem was never delivered than when, not long ago, it was revealed that he had not lost his little fortune, because he had been so occupied with the Nation's business that he had not attended to his

own; and there came to him tender messages of sympathy, and with the utmost delicacy contributions sent anonymously lest he should return them, saying, "I cannot accept these evidences of your good will." Friends have paid the debts of more than one statesman, but it has never before happened that in time of personal financial distress, there have been submitted from all parts of the country silent and anonymous tokens such as these were.

To such a man as these brief hints suggest McKinley to be, it must seem true that the golden rule for such a Government as ours is the second of the greater commandments of the Scriptures; and it is easy to understand why he believes that this rule set forth in law by gentle and kindly command compels the common American hand-clasp, each citizen through the operation of that law giving and every one receiving strength. No dreamer, no theorist, McKinley has yet made of his faith a poem as he tells it; for as he speaks, it seems no longer merely a matter of dreary schedules and hated imposts, but reveals the promise of that most beautiful of conditions, a happy people who may compass greater things than men have dared to dream.—E. Jay Edwards, *in McClure's Magazine, December, 1883 Reprinted by kind permission of Publisher, S. S. McClure, Limited, New York.*

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